

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /016 R

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DRAFTED BY:NEA:WCLUVERIUS

APPROVED BY:NEA:MDRAPER

S/S-O:MTANNER

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TO AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 175452

EXDIS

FOL RPT CAIRO 9600 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT JUL 15

QUOTE: S E C R E T CAIRO 9600

EXDIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: AEMR, US, LE

SUBJECT: EVACUATION FROM LEBANON

REF: STATE 174982

1. MET WITH FAHMY EARLY THIS AFTERNOON TO DISCUSS
REFERENCE SUBJECT. AFTER EXPLAINING REASONS FOR OUR
DECISION, INCLUDING PRINCE FAHD'S ADVICE, AND SEVERAL
ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT, I RECALLED THE PRESIDENT
AND HE HAD ONCE BEFORE BEEN OF GREAT ASSISTANCE IN THE
JUNE EVACUATION AND SAID WE WOULD AGAIN APPRECIATE
EGYPTIAN ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE
UPCOMING ONE. SPECIFICALLY, WHAT DID HE THINK ABOUT
THE FEASIBILITY OF USING THE AIRPORT AND OF OBTAINING
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THE COOPERATION OF THE ARAB LEAGUE FORCES IN ANY AIRBORNE

DEPARTURE, ADDITIONALLY, WE WOULD APPRECIATE HIS GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE PLO URGENTLY AT A HIGH LEVEL TO INSURE THAT WE HAVE ITS FULL COOPERATION IN ANY DEPARTURE, BE IT BY AIR, LAND OR SEA. PLO COULD BE INFORMED THAT WE ARE PLANNING FURTHER REDUCTION IN SIZE OF EMBASSY AND AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN BEIRUT BECAUSE OF STRINGENT LIVING CONDITIONS AND SUPPLY SITUATION. IT WAS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE THAT EGYPTIANS IMPRESS STRONGLY ON PLO IMPORTANCE OF ITS COOPERATION IN EVACUATION. PLO SHOULD KNOW WE WILL NEED TO BEGIN NOTIFYING AMERICANS IN BEIRUT AT END OF THIS WEEK. AN EARLY REPLY FROM PLO, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE BY FRIDAY, JULY 16, WOULD BE HELPFUL FOR TIMELY PLANNING. SEELYE AND EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT WAS BEING INSTRUCTED CONTACT PLO THERE.

2. FAHMY LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND WAS OBVIOUSLY A BIT TROUBLED BY OUR PROPOSED MOVE. HE PROFESSED NOT TO UNDERSTAND WHY PRINCE FAHD SHOULD HAVE GIVEN THE ADVICE HE DID. PRINCE SAUD BIN FAISAL, WHO HAD BEEN HERE FOR AL SESSION, HAD LEFT ONLY TWO DAYS AGO FOR DAMASCUS, ON KING KHALID' EXPRESSINSTRUCTIONS, TO WORK ON BRINGING SYRIANS AND PLO TOGETHER. MOREOVER, KAMAL ADHAM HAD JUST BEEN HERE AND GIVEN NO SUCH ALARMIST ESTIMATE.

3. ON THE CONTRARY, THERE ARE SIGNS OF SOME IMPROVEMENT. ACCORDING TO EGYPTIAN REPORTS, APART FROM BEIRUT, SHOOTING IN MOST OTHER PARTS OF COUNTRY HAS LESSENED. LAST NIGHT ASAD, AFTER MEETING WITH LEBANESE CHRISTIAN REPS, HAD ANNOUNCED FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT HE WANTED A CEASEFIRE. THE SYRIANS ARE ALSO FINALLY WITHDRAWING FROM SIDON. IF THE PRESS IS TO BE BELIEVED, ARAFAT IS GOING TO DAMASCUS TOMORROW TO MEET WITH ASAD. ALL THESE ARE GOOD SIGNS.

4. FAHMY THEN TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE THAT THE PRESIDENT, HE AND GAMASY WILL TRAVEL TO RIYADH ON SATURDAY, JULY 17, ALONG WITH PRESIDENT NUMERI OF THE SUDAN, TO CONSULT WITH KING KHALID, PRINCE FAHD AND OTHERS ON "SUDANESE MATTERS." HE IMPLIED THAT HE WOULD QUERY FAHD ABOUT THE PRINCE'S ADVICE, WHICH FAHMY OBVIOUSLY

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FELT WAS UNHELPFUL. OUR PROPOSED EVACUATION, UNLESS CAREFULLY HANDLED, COULD ENCOURAGE "WILD ELEMENTS" TO GO ON RAMPAGE. PREDICTABLY, FAHMY PRESSED HARD AS TO WHETHER PROPOSED EVACUATION IS PROMPTED BY INFORMATION WE HAVE ABOUT A PLANNED ISRAELI MOVE INTO LEBANON, OR SOME NEW CHRISTIAN ACTION, OR SYRIAN INTENTIONS TO ESCALATE THE CONFLICT I REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED WE HAVE NO SUCH INFORMATION AND THAT THE PROPOSED EVACUATION IS

PROMPTED SOLELY BY INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT LIVING SITUATION AND THE RISKS TO EMBASSY PERSONNEL. ALTHOUGH I DOUBT THAT FAHMY'S SUSPICIONS WERE FULLY ALLAYED, HE FINALLY ACCEPTED THIS.

5. IN RESPONSE TO OUR QUERY, HE ADVISED THAT IF WE DECIDE TO GO AHEAD WITH EVACUATION, WE SHOULD AVOID DOING SO IN "PIECEMEAL" FASHION. EVACUATION PROCEDURES SHOULD BE AS NORMAL AS POSSIBLE. IN HIS JUDGMENT, THE BEST EGRESS POINT WOULD BE THROUGH THE PORT OF SIDON. AN AIRPORT EVACUATION MIGHT BE FEASIBLE, BUT THE ELEMENTS OF THE ARAB LEAGUE FORCES STATIONED THERE ARE NOT RPT NOT FULLY IN CONTROL. IT HAS BEEN THE KATAIB FORCES THAT HAVE SHELLED THE AIRPORT. IF WE PREFER AIRPORT EVACUATION, WE SHOULD "INSTRUCT" FRANGIE AND THE CHRISTIANS TO BEHAVE, SINCE NEITHER THE SYRIANS NOR THE PLO IS IN CONTROL THERE.

6. IN MY PRESENCE, FAHMY DICTATED AN IMMEDIATE TELEGRAM TO THE PLO LEADERSHIP IN BEIRUT INFORMING IT OF OUR INTENDED EVACUATION AND REQUESTING ITS FULL COOPERATION. FAHMY ALSO STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF EMBASSY BEIRUT CONTACTING PLO DIRECTLY THROUGH SECURITY CHANNEL. HE ALSO PROMISED INSTRUCT EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT TO BE HELPFUL WITH PLO. FAHMY MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT PLO HAD ADVISED EGYPTIANS THAT EMBASSY BEIRUT HAS INITIATED A SECURITY CONTACT WITH IT. HE EXPRESSED GRATIFICATION FOR THIS ACTION ON OUR PART.

7. WE AGREED KEEP IN TOUCH.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CITIZEN PROTECTION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, EVACUATIONS, INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JUL 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE175452
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA:WCLUVERIUS
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760273-0817
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760754/aaaabvfj.tel
Line Count: 155
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 76 STATE 174982
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EVACUATION FROM LEBANON
TAGS: AEMR, PFOR, PINS, US, LE, EG, XF, (FAHMY, ISMAIL)
To: JIDDA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006